# Search For Yesterday

## A History of Levy County, Florida

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## Chapter Twenty-Six

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**Levy County Archives Committee**

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**Bronson, Florida**

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# DEDICATION

Chapter 26 of Search for Yesterday is dedicated to Mrs. Kathryn and Mr. Travis Harris. Kathryn has demonstrated continuous dedicated service to The Levy County Archives Committee. She attends all of our monthly meetings, whenever possible, and tells us how much she enjoys being with us and enjoys the meetings. Her experience as a long-time school teacher is a big asset as she shares her ideas, knowledge, and historical information with us. She was totally responsible for compiling all of the information for Chapter 25 including taking the material to the printer.

Travis, although never a member of this committee, was usually present at the meetings and was always willing to assist Kathryn in any of her committee projects.

## HELP

The Levy County Archives Committee requests your help. The history of the churches listed in this Chapter is suppose to be the beginning history of these churches. We welcome your comments or input on any of these or if you would like to see a particular church listed in our Chapters please call Lindon Lindsey in Chiefland at 352-493-4066.

# EBENEZER BAPTIST CHURCH HISTORY

Ebenezer Baptist Church was organized in 1860. The first five years of records were lost. The organization of Ebenezer Baptist Church predated the Harmony Baptist Association by 19 years, making Ebenezer Baptist Church the oldest church in the association, 145 years old.

The first pastor of record was P.B. Colson who was the pastor in 1865. There have been 33 different pastors and 11 different church clerks. Bro. Jim Countryman was the longest serving pastor with 11 years of service. In January, 2001, Billy Philman became our pastor.

Until 1869 the place of worship was referred to only as an "Arbor." The first mention of a pastor's salary was in 1898 when the church agreed to pay $50.00 a year. The first Sunday School was organized in 1905.

The first record of cooperation with the Baptist Association was in 1866. The first building was constructed in between 1866-70.

In 1871 the Ebenezer Baptist Church organized Pine Grove Baptist Church as a mission church and transferred 16 names.

The first record of membership roll in 1874 was 40 members. The smallest membership roll was 20 members in 1885.

In 1890, the church building was rebuilt, the first having been destroyed by fire. This building was remodeled and enlarged in 1922. Sunday School rooms were added in 1946. Ebenezer had worship service only once a month until 1943, when worship services were held twice a month and in 1951 worship services were held every Sunday.

In 1952, a Building Committee of five was appointed and plans were made to build a new church building. The foundation was laid and the first Homecoming was observed on October 24, 1952. Homecoming has been held each year since, on the 4th Sunday in October. In 1954 the auditorium was dedicated. The educational annex was dedicated in 1965.

The church observed its 100th year as an organized church on December 4, 1960. In 1973, the fellowship hall was completed and the kitchen furnished. Dedication services were held on September 30, 1973. The pastorium was built and dedicated June 1, 1975.

The church building was once again destroyed by fire October 29, 1978. Worship Service was held in the open yard, the pastorium and later in a tent. On March 25, 1979, the church met in the new unfinished building to ordain Bro. Danny Quincey to the ministry, being the first minister to come from Ebenezer's membership. The first building in 1869, with an area of 816 square feet, cost $117.00. Today's building, with an area of 4,944 square feet, cost $97,591.00 and was debt-free upon completion. The building was dedicated October 28, 1979, just one year after fire destroyed the building. A fellowship hall was added in 1980.

God has called two other preachers from the membership of Ebenezer. Bro. Clifford Quincey, and Bro. Jamie Brock. They both attended the Baptist College in Graceville.

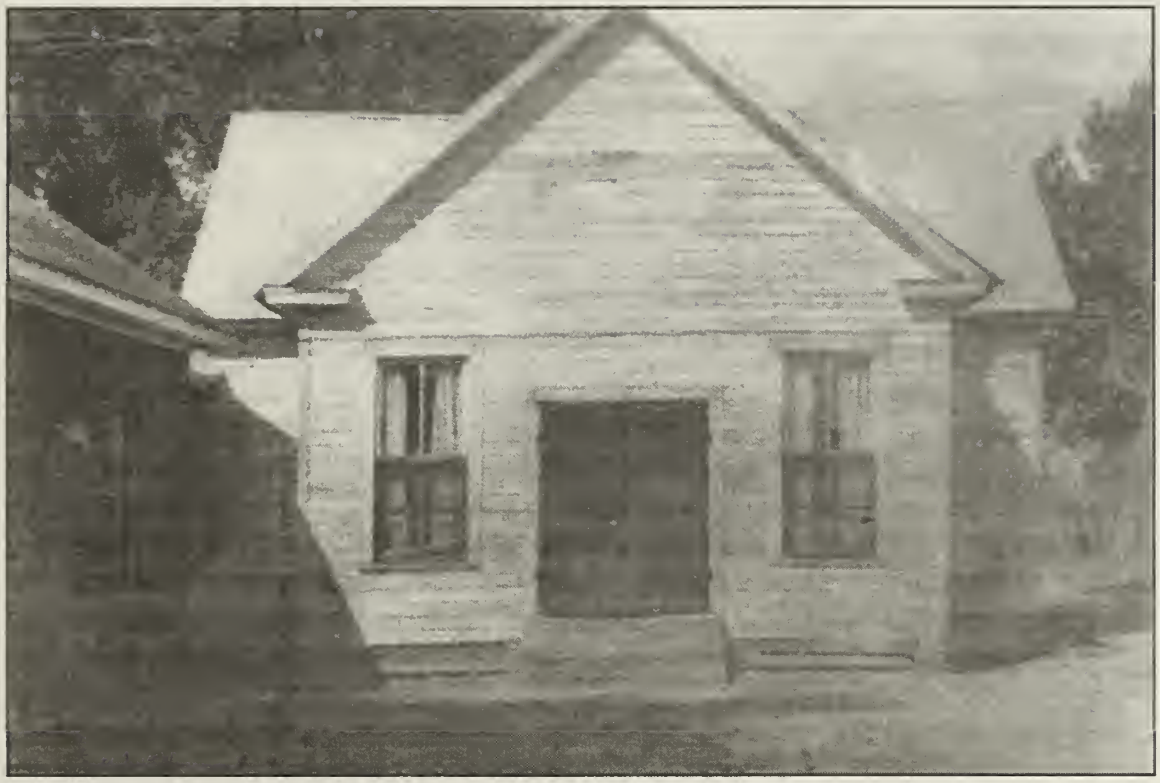
The church added eight acres to the cemetery in recent years and upgraded the sound system in the auditorium in 2001.

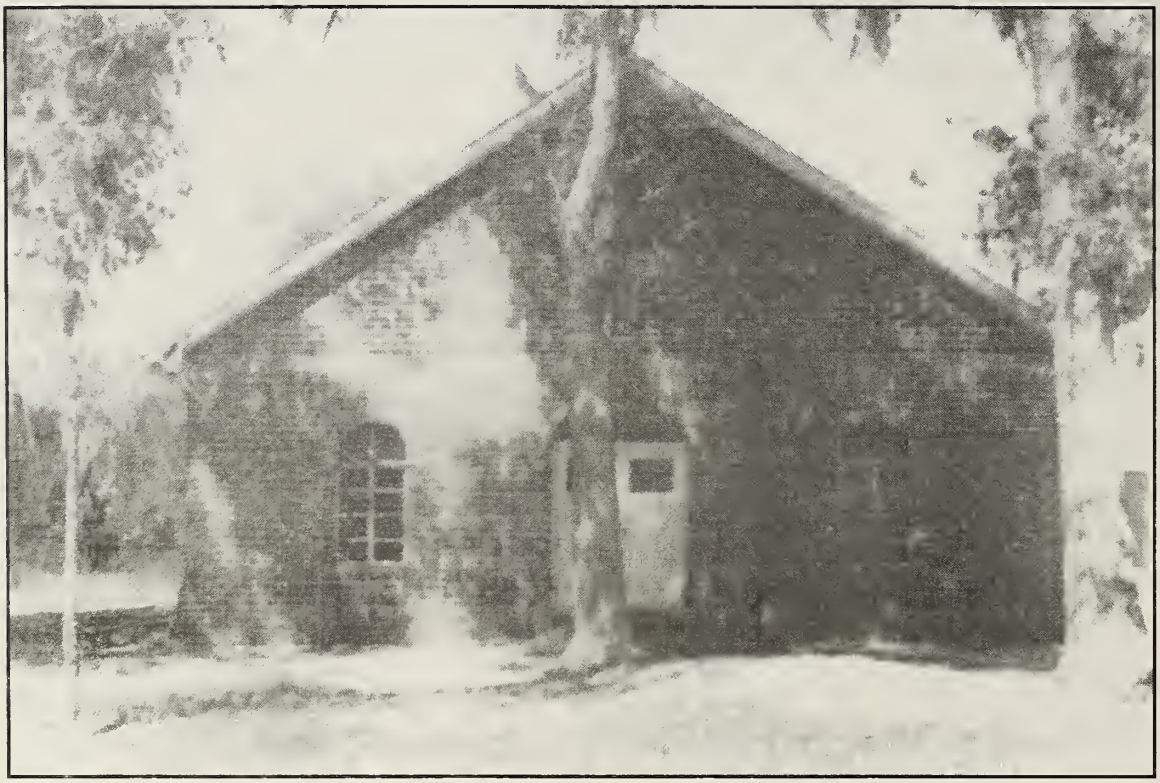
In 1997, the church voted to build a 6,000 square foot fellowship hall. Today the building is complete and is debt-free. The old fellowship hall has been renovated for much needed Sunday School space. A cable for closed circuit TV has been installed to broadcast services from the auditorium into the fellowship hall and nursery. A big screen TV has been purchased for the fellowship hall.

Pastors of Ebenezer Baptist Church
1865-2005

P.B. Colson
Simion Sheffield
Z.A. Crumpton
J.K Sheffield
J.P. Abott
W.S. Perry
P.A. McOlister
P. Faircloth
W.J. Marton
W.J. Folks
J.W. Griffin
J.R. Douglas
C.J. Bruner
W.H. Bames
H.G. McElroy
R.M. Standly
J.L. Morris
E.T. Vining
Austin McElroy
C.H. Churchwell
Perry Edwards
C.L. Crissey
Sam Quincey
Virgil Smith
W.E. Johnson
Lonnie Dobb
Eddie Hatch
Paul Graham
Jim Countryman
Ron Black
Joe Gardner
Billy Philman

At present (2005) there are 208 church members.





## BRONSON UNITED METHODIST

Church History

The Bronson United Methodist Church was organized in 1867 with five members: Dr. James M. Jackson, Col. W.R. Coulter, W.A. Shands, Moses Dean and John Penny. The first pastor was Elias J. Knight, who also preached at Levyville, Rocky Hammock, Otter Creek and Fort Fannin. Near the end of 1867, John Ira Epperson moved from North Georgia with his large family of devout Methodists. His wife Jane was the daughter of Col. W.R. Coulter. The new members became very active and descendants of the Epperson family are still members of our church today.

The newly organized church was encouraged, and the following year a small church was built at a cost of $400. Services the first year had been held in an unfinished warehouse. Col. Coulter gave the lot north of the old cemetery for the church.

In 1870, the Sunday School bought a $20 library and the interest was greatly increased.

The first Board of Trustees was chosen in 1871. Charter members were J.H. Hawkins, John Ira Epperson of Stafford Pond, James M. Jackson, W.R. Coulter, W.A. Shands of Bronson, S.P. Hardee, S.H. Worthinton of Rocky Hammock and Antioch, James Overstreet of Oak Grove, and S.W.B. Stephens of Charity.

In 1872, member E.W. Rush was licensed to preach and in 1875 W.R. Hudson was licensed to preach.

The pastors were abundant in labors, but few minutes were kept during the early years from 1876 until the turn of the century. The names of members and those received during these years were recorded, showing that the church and Sunday School never ceased to function.

The church we worship in today was built in 1886, east of Bronson High School on the lot given by Col. Coulter in 1867. In 1900, the Missionary Society, home and foreign, was organized and also the Orange Blossoms, the Children's Missionary Society. Each was a great help to thechurch spiritually and financially.

In 1901 a comfortable two-story parsonage was built. In 1906 Bronson and Cedar Key had preaching two Sundays each. The afternoons were given to Meredith and Ellzey.

In 1916, Dr. J.M. Jackson, Jr. and his wife Ethel, deeded to the church the plot of ground known as Jackson Island. This was given because of former church ties and many cherished memories. In later years, the pine timber on this island was sold and still later the island itself was sold and the money was used for our church.

In 1920 this church was moved to its present location and in 1921 the parsonage was moved right next door to it.

In 1926 an education annex, designed by devoted member, Benjamin Stokes, was added to the Church building. The annex included Sunday School rooms, a pastor's study and a kitchen. Loyal and devoted member and longtime Sunday School Superintendent John Willis donated much of the funds for this building. Today this annex houses the pastor's study, a Sunday School classroom and other storage areas.

In December of 1933, it was decided to organize a Young Women's Missionary Circle. Mrs. T.F. McCall was elected captain of the circle and the members fondly named their new group to honor Anzonetta Epperson, their counselor and constant leader and advisor in missionary interests at home and abroad. The Anzonetta Epperson Circle is still active today and the ladies enjoy spiritual fellowship and local missionary work.

In 1934 member Samuel I. Hendricks was licensed to preach.

In 1936 member Ralph W. Rivers was licensed to preach.

In 1939 Mrs. Frank Marshburn was elected the first president of the Women's Society of

Christian Service in the Methodist Church.

In 1940 Methodist hymnals were presented to the church by Anzonetta Epperson in memory of her husband, Sen. W.J. Epperson, who died in 1939.

In 1942 Christian and American flags were presented to the church by Mrs. Frank McCall and Mrs. W.J. Epperson.

In 1945, a World War II Service Roll of Honor was erected in the sanctuary and new lighting was installed.

In 1946, Mrs. W.J. Epperson presented church chimes in loving memory of her husband. The Augusta Graham Circle was formed for the senior ladies in the church, honoring Mrs. Graham for her devout Christian service and leadership.

The recreation center was built in 1947 on the lot in back of the church. There we had games for young folks, a barbecue pit and picnic tables for family suppers. Our first homecoming was held that year on September 28th and is now observed every two years on the second Sunday in October.

Also in 1947 Wayne Duden was licensed to preach. The Minnie Bean Bible Class was organized and named in honor of devoted and loved member, Minnie Bean. Gas heating was installed in our church.

In 1949 the ceiling of the church was lowered and new floors were installed with lumber given by Anzonetta and Buren Brice.

In 1950 the families of Mr. and Mrs. F.B. Marshburn and Mr. and Mrs. S.F. Harris gave a piano and organ in memory of their mother and grandmother, Anzonetta Epperson.

Our church had been on a charge with Archer and Cedar Key until 1953 when Bronson was made a station. New furniture replaced the old and pews were given in honor or memory of many devoted church members. Mrs. Carroll Gilbert was licensed to preach that year.

In 1954 the beautiful picture "The Good Shepherd" was given by Mrs. Frank Marshburn in memory of her mother, Anzonetta Epperson. Also given in her memory was the communion table by Mr. and Mrs. Frank Marshburn and Mr. and Mrs. S.G. Harris. The Augusta Graham Circle installed new lights in the sanctuary.

In 1956 the brass cross and candleholders were added in memory of loved ones in the church by Ruby Drummond and Evelyn and Gordon Drummond. The brass vases were given by Luther, Wayne and Jan Drummond.

In 1960, the church held a banquet to honor four of its outstanding members for their leadership and faithful service rendered to the church: Mrs. Augusta Graham, Mrs. Minnie Bean, Mrs. Margaret Marshburn, and Mr. A.P. Hardee.

In 1961, a lot was purchased and a fund for a more modern parsonage was started. Our church had air conditioning installed by the Augusta Graham Circle.

In 1964 the parsonage was finished and dedicated to the Glory of God. The fund for a new educational building was underway and the old parsonage was used for Sunday School rooms and pastor's study until 1969, when it was torn down.

In 1965 Mrs. Frank Marshburn presented a new organ to the church in memory of her husband. New draperies were added and floors refinished in the church league room with funds from the MYF, the Minnie Bean Bible Class and the Methodist Men.

In 1966 a new utility room was added to the parsonage and fully equipped with electric washer and dryer. The pastor's study was air conditioned and new parsonage furniture acquired. We were named the 1966 Church of the Year.

In 1967, new rugs and appliances were added to the parsonage by the Anzonetta Epperson Circle and air-conditioning was installed. On April 23, 1967, a consecration service was held for

the new education building. The building was to include classrooms, kitchen, assembly hall and library. On October 8, 1967 the cornerstone of the new education building was laid. This was our 100th Year Anniversary. Invited guests included the Resident Bishop of the Florida Annual Conference Bishop James Henley, and the District Superintendent to the Gainesville District of the Florida Annual Conference, Rev. John W. Sikes. Our church was named 1967 Church of the Year for the Gainesville district.

In 1971 the new education building was completely finished and dedicated. The cost of the building was $20,000. A piano, recreation equipment, kitchen equipment, tables and cabinets were given by friends and members of the church. Chairs were also given for the Minnie Bean Bible Class and a gas lantern was donated and installed by Lint Moring to light the area between the education building and the church.

The church sanctuary was refinished and central air conditioning installed in 1971 at a cost of $3,500. New carpets were given by Mrs. F.B. Marshburn. The church vestibule was repainted to make the job complete.

During 1973 a covered walkway was built between the two buildings making it possible to move from one to the other during inclement weather. More chairs were purchased for the education building. Carpet was installed in the nursery and kindergarten classrooms in memory of Lillian Graham, who had recently passed away.

In 1975 the church began to contribute to the support of Elizabeth Howell, Missionary to Japan. Miss Howell has visited our church and taught about her ministry going on there. Carpet was installed in the Minnie Bean Bible Class in loving memory of Vida Rivers, who had taught that class for many years. The education building was carpeted by a generous member. Frances Hardee gave beautiful pew cushions in honor of her parents Haskell and Myrtle Hardee, very devout members.

In 1977 Lil Wellman gave pew Bibles in memory of her brother, Jack Kimble. A prayer chain was started to notify families of prayer needs by telephone. A blood bank account was begun and faithfully promoted by loving member Goodie Hitchings. Today, Marjorie Phillips continues this worthy cause. A jail ministry was started and continued for several years. Faithful members visited the jail every Sunday afternoon to share the Word of God with inmates. Many souls were saved and the Word was given.

On June 3, 1978, special ordination services were held in the sanctuary ordaining our very own Rev. W. Tim Baughn, as an Elder in the Florida Conference. The Bishop, Joel D. McDavid and District Superintendent, along with many of Tim's friends and colleagues throughout the conference were present at the ordination and reception that followed. An additional education building housing our nursery and primary classes were built and furnished and dedicated to the memory of Rev. W. Tim Baughn, who passed away on June 13, 1978.

A new ladies circle was formed and fondly called the ROC (Reaching Out Circle). Although no longer active, this group had many years of good devotion and fellowship.

At Homecoming services in 1979, a piano was given to the church to use in the Minnie Bean Bible Class in loving memory of Vida Rivers, by her husband William, son Ralph and daughter L'Louise Connors. During 1979-80 our church had a pictorial directory prepared.

In 1981 the outside of the church had just been painted when Homecoming arrived. A project to purchase a life size Nativity scene was headed up by the Anzonetta Epperson Circle. With donations from many church members, the beautiful set was purchased and a stable was built. Each year our nativity scene touches many who pause and ponder the reason for the Christmas season.

In 1983-84 a new roof was put on our church. The back hall and old kitchen were renovated

and paneling and new light fixtures, carpeting, curtains and drapes were installed. Vapor lights were added to the back of the church. A gas lamp was installed in the front by Lint Moring. The renovations were gifts from the Anzonetta Epperson Circle and other loving members. John and Pat Swilley, and Clifton and Elizabeth Griffin purchased a new typewriter for our office. New furniture and appliances were purchased for our parsonage.

The 1984 Theron Griffin was honored for 33 years of service as Secretary to the Administrative Board.

In 1985 new carpet was installed in the education building and on the platform of the sanctuary. Ceiling fans were given by the Moon family. A lighted outdoor sign was given by Jack, Phyllis and Christopher Cowart in loving memory of her mother Sylvia Thomas. The Anzonetta Epperson Circle purchased new hymnals in memory of their friend and member, Sylvia Thomas.

A prayer and Bible study group was organized in 1986. The old walkway from the church to our education buildings was replaced with a new cover of aluminum. The Anzonetta Epperson Circle landscaped the church grounds adding beauty to our buildings. New tables were given to the dining hall by the Cowart family.

In October 1987, the Carl and Lil Wellman Memorial Fund was established by their sons Kim and Joe Wellman. This fund supported local missions. Our church honored Frances Gilbert for her years of service as Sunday School teacher and pianist. We celebrated with dinner on the grounds following a special Sunday morning service. A new organ was given in memory of Frank Marshburn by his children Anzonetta and Buren Brice, Juanita and Luther White, and Epperson and Mary Ann Marshburn.

In 1988 an evening Bible School for children and adults was instituted. It was a success and spiritually beneficial to all who attended. From 1987-89 "A Separate Peace" was a blessing to our church. They were a group of young singers under the direction of Wes and Rita Bennett, who added a new dimension to our church outreach through music. New microphones were given by Gerald and Marjorie Phillips.

In 1989, loyal church members purchased a church van. It has provided transportation for groups of all ages to many exciting places.

In 1990 the Gilbert family presented 100 new hymnals in memory of their father, Carroll Gilbert and to honor their mother, Frances Gilbert. The Juanita Allen family donated a piano for the education building.

In 1991, a handicap ramp was added to our church entrance by the Brice family. The floor in the sanctuary was refinished by the Anzonetta Epperson Circle. A beautiful baptismal bowl was given in loving memory of circle member Elizabeth "Johnnie" Griffin. The circle renamed their annual fund-raising Christmas bazaar to honor the memory of Johnnie Griffin.

In 1992 The Anzonetta Epperson Circle began a memorial to Barbara Jean Rowe, by sponsoring a youth to summer camp each year. Jack and Phyllis Cowart honored their son Christopher on his graduation by presenting the church with beautiful brass candlelighters. A Lay Witness Mission was held at our church that year and spiritual bonding was a special blessing for many. A big event of 1992 was the beginning of our Share Program. For a small sum and a few hours of volunteer work, anyone can become a recipient of a large portion of great food. Share is a huge success with many volunteers community wide. Holiday baskets of Share are a part of local missions.

In 1993 the Minnie Bean Bible Class, known as the league room to many, was totally renovated by the Anzonetta Epperson Circle and friends of the church. Lovely tables for flower arrangements in the sanctuary were given in memory of Lottie Hilton, Thelma Brookings, and

Erna Quarles. Members of the Young at Heart provided funds for a new copier for our church office, a truly welcomed addition. They sponsored a big community Gospel sing and dinner at Easter.

In 1993, the MYF took a great trip to Lake Junaluska. Bill and Glenda Womble organized an "Angel Tree" gift giving as part of the prison ministry. This tradition continues today.

In 1993 beloved member Margaret Marshburn passed away at the age of 98. She had been christened in our church in 1895 and became a member in 1905. She served as our church pianist for many years. A new sound system was purchased with gifts from her many friends and family.

In 1994 beautiful new communion cloths were given in memory of devoted member Harriet Shewey. Mrs. Shewey was a longtime member and served as communion steward for many years. The family of our beloved member Harriet "Goodie" Hitchings added an eternal light to our sanctuary in her memory. With gifts from friends, new pew cushions were also given in Goodie's memory.

In 1995 our youth presented a re-enactment of the Last Supper at Easter. The event was well attended and very spiritually moving as the young actors portrayed Jesus and the disciples so well.

Also, in 1995, Theron Griffin was honored during a Sunday morning service and presented with a plaque for his many years of devoted service to our church. A dinner followed with many friends and family present.

On the first day of school in 1995, our church initiated a prayer meeting at the flagpole for the students and faculty in our public schools. Leaders in other community churches as well as members of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes joined us.

During the end of 1995 and the beginning of 1996, our church received many donations in memory of beloved members Tim Gilbert, Joan LeGrand, Theron Griffin, and Violet Owens. In 1996, our church was involved in the sponsorship of Elizabeth Phillips to travel to Israel for the celebration in Jerusalem. Elizabeth was part of mission team and we enjoyed hearing of her experiences.

During 1996, Richard LeGrand donated lights for our volleyball court and Ed and Peggy Rowe graciously gave of their artistic ability with a beautiful rendering of our church for note cards and the cover for our bulletin. The Anzonetta Epperson Circle has these sketches available for matting and framing for a precious memento of our church.

The Methodist Men began their tradition of a Sweetheart Dinner for Valentines Day. Pastor Conrad and Janice Underwood left in May of 1996 and we welcomed Pastor Tim and Kimberly Wood.

In 1997, the church received a memorial donation of additional hymnbooks by the Anzonetta Epperson Circle in memory of longtime member Ruby Croft. Valerie Cowart donated books, tapes and a picture in memory of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm Cowart. Books were also donated from the library of Faith Weeks. A new organ was given in memory of B.E. Brice. New altar cloths were purchased and a new directory was published. The church was the recipient of a generous gift from the estate of Judy Keen Batten, longtime church member and friend.

During 1997, a new fellowship hall pavilion, with a new swing set, was completed along with much "sprucing up" by painting the inside of the sanctuary as well as the inside and outside of the fellowship hall. Homecoming welcomed Evangelist Billy Mayo and there was a full house, with dinner on the grounds and an afternoon Gospel sing.

In 1998, our church became a station, no longer sharing a pastor with Ellzey. The Tim Baughn Building received a new roof and the Anzonetta Epperson Circle bought new beautiful

wrought iron railing and Richard LeGrand graciously installed it in the memory of longtime member and loving friend, Myrtle Hardee. The Anzonetta Epperson Circle donated a memorial for friend, Gloria Mara.

In 1999, new candlesticks, vases, flags, cross, baptismal bowl, and offering plates for the altar were given in loving memory of Margaret Akins, longtime member and church organist. Also given in Margaret's memory was a beautiful eight-foot gold cross for the pulpit wall.

The Anzonetta Epperson Circle funded the painting of our church building. The church steeple is being repaired and our century old building is lovingly being cared for. The Methodist Men are very involved with the upkeep of our church.

In 2000, a successful Tuesday Night Ministry was launched for Alcohol and Drug Awareness and Anger Management. This ministry also includes the serving of an evening meal.

The Anzonetta Epperson Circle bought beautiful new doors for the sanctuary and with memorial gifts additional Master Chorus Books were purchased. Memorials were given for beloved friend and member Marguerite Anderson. Longtime friends and former members of our church, Helen and Livingston Anderson also passed away.

The parsonage received a lot of much-needed attention under the supervision of Richard LeGrand, who gives so unselfishly of his time and talents. The Anzonetta Epperson Circle purchased some new furniture and many members assisted with the renovation of our parsonage. During the past two years, the church has helped sponsor field mission trips for several of our young members.

This year new banners for the sanctuary were so graciously and lovingly made by talented members. The church also received memorials with the passing of much-loved member Glenn McIntosh.

The Lord continues to lead our church in His service. Our mission emphasis continues with monthly support of missions and the Share program continues its outreach in our community. A discretionary fund also helps in local missions and several members participate in jail ministry. Our church is active with Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, prayer groups, men's fellowship, women's circle, and adult outings. There are two Sunday services, a Wednesday night service, fifth Sunday night family suppers, and various special events during the year.

Elias J. Knight
J.W. Thompkins
T.J. Nixon
J.B. Johnson
J.P. DePass
J.R. Crowder
S.E. Phillips
J.C. Ley
Ed F. Ley
W.S. Richardson
J.A. Howland
J.P. DePass
Samuel Scott
John Beers
W.F. Norton
C.N. Duncan
J.B. Frazee
B.T. Rape
W.H. Steinmeyer
R.M. Williams
W. R. Crandell
J.C. Collier
W.C. Norton
Edward K. Denson
R.L. Yeates
W.H. Newkirk
Jessie J. Jones
P.A. Fletcher
P.K. Howell
L.E. Wright
J.C. West
L.B. Simpson
W.C. Norton
C.H. Voss
J.A. Bridges

Jesse E. Jones
S.E. Hendrix
W.H. Herndon
A.A. Godfrey
Clare S. Hall
R.H. Carr
Lorne Sparks
W.G. Strickland
Oliver Hatfield
Walter Jessup
E.D. Conway
William McMillen
John Bennion
John Wright
I. Springer
John Wright
Fletcher Peeler

Robert Lenz
Ernest Edmund
Charles Hutchins
David Underwood
Wesley Price
Guy Athearn
W. Timothy Baughn
Robert Sterner
Herman Boyette
Frank Daniel
Michael E. Webb
Frank Mason
John Davenport
Conrad Underwood
Ted Wood
Carroll Phillips
Mario R. Chacon

# THE FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Williston, Florida

1870-1995

In 1867, John Ira Epperson of Cherokee County, Georgia, loaded his family into a covered wagon and set out for Florida where two of his wife's brothers had already settled. They settled in the vicinity of Stafford Pond near what is now Montbrook (once called Phoenix). Finding no church in the area, he set out to help provide religious services for his family and those around him.

He began by inviting his neighbors to his home for the purpose of holding religious services. They enjoyed singing hymns and studying the Bible each Sunday afternoon. The families became even more interested when John Ira invited the Rev. E. J. Knight to come and preach once a month in his home. By the end of that year (1869), it was obvious that they needed to build a house of worship.

Although none of them had very much financially, they had faith enough to believe that they could combine their efforts and build a church. At the appointed time, they met and went to work. There was no sawmill available, but the men and boys knew they could cut the pine trees which were plentiful and peel away the bark to make suitable poles. They even cut the boards for the floor and covering. In a few weeks, their log church was ready for services. They were able to secure the seats and pulpit from the old Liberty Chapel which had been used by the people who lived just southeast of the present site of Williston. The building had not been used since prior to the Civil War and it was beyond repair.

John Arthur Hawkins, son-in-law of John Ira Epperson, wrote this about the pulpit they salvaged from the old chapel, "It was made from a dry goods box with two or three steps to get into it. There was then a door that closed."

Thus, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South became a reality for these faithful people. It was located in the Orange Hill area. Rev. J.H.D. McRae was the first appointed minister, and John Ira Epperson was the first Sunday School Superintendent. In addition to John Ira's family, there were the families of Joshua P. Hawkins, Mrs. Susan Tyner, Gosper Sistrunk, the Limbaughs, the Westbrooks and the Fugates.

In 1871, while Rev. Robert Howren Barnett was pastor, a larger and better building was erected on land donated by Joshua P. Hawkins. This building was also in the Orange Hill vicinity. The town of Williston had not yet become a center of population. Montbrook (Stafford Pond area) and Wacahoota were still the largest settlements on this side of the county.

Mrs. John Arthur Hawkins wrote, "The congregation was delighted to have a better place to worship. The membership grew, and at one time, 36 members were received into the church which was served by some of the ablest preachers in the Florida Conference. These were the days of the itinerant preachers who spent hours in the saddle as they rode horseback between the parishes they served."

It might be of interest to note that the circuit rider, Rev. Robert Marvin Ellzey, served this church from 1872-1875. The beautiful little church at Ellzey bears his name. In addition, he has many descendants in Williston as well as the other side of the county. Amelia Ellzey Erwin, Jeannette Meeks Barton, the late Joyce Meeks Bullock, and Orian Meeks are grandchildren of Rev. R.M. Ellzey. They and their descendants make up a long list of people who are (or have been) members of this church.

The Women's Society was organized in 1886, with Mrs. John Ira Epperson as president.

It was not until 1893 that the congregation moved to a small frame building on Church Street (now SW 2nd Street) in the growing town of Williston. The land was donated by John Burk

Epperson, son of John Ira. The first parsonage was built adjacent to the church in 1901 during the pastorate of Rev. J.L. Patillo. It was later enlarged to a two-story building during the pastorate of Rev. John Beers who was here 1910-1912.

Rev. R.A. Guy served as pastor from 1917 to 1922. It was during his pastorate that the present church was erected on land donated by Preston Nesbit King. The cornerstone was laid by Rev. L.C. Jenkins, Presiding Elder of the Gainesville District, in December of 1920. According to Mrs. Hawkins, construction began soon after World War I. When the building was finished, the seats, pulpit and other usable items from the old church were brought to the beautiful new building. The old building was sold to Ransom Westbrook and converted into a private dwelling for his family. The money from the old church was used to help defray the expenses of the new building. (This was the building, which was moved to make way for the new Friendship Hall in recent years).

The first service was held 6 October/November 1921 while Rev. Guy was still pastor. (Mrs. Hawkins gives October as the month; other sources give November) The beautiful church was in place but so was the huge debt that hung over the group. Remember these were depression days, and money was very scarce.

Reverend Thomas Williams proved to be a blessing to the church. In 1926, he began a drive and raised about $5,000 toward reducing the debt. Bazaars, oyster suppers, and other projects helped to raise money bit by bit. Bank failures, bad crops, and financial losses put stumbling stones in the way. You can imagine how members of the WMS felt when the bank closed with their hard earned money which amounted to about $1000. To their credit, they just started over and kept working.

The Church Extension Board came to the rescue in 1935. Rev. W.L. Huggins, the pastor at that time, accepted the challenge to match funds with the Church Extension Board. He and Lucius Newsom began a house to house campaign to collect money. What a wonderful feeling it must have been to have such a burden lifted.

The long awaited day, 8 March 1936, finally arrived. The beautiful building was dedicated by Bishop Hay of the Texas Conference, assisted by Rev. W.A. Meyers, Presiding Elder. Rev. Huggins must have been delighted to have the opportunity to be the one to burn the mortgage. He deserved it.

The new parsonage which was erected next to the church in 1922, was on the same strip of land which was donated by Preston Nesbit King. This building was used as a parsonage until the dedication of the beautiful new parsonage on 22 January 1978. The old parsonage was used for a few years as the youth house until the youth building was purchased. During the years many improvements have been made. Sunday School rooms have been added and a nursery has been added to care for the small children.

The beautiful Whitehurst Memorial Chapel, with complete furnishings, was erected by the Whitehurst Family as a memorial to Maggie Anderson Whitehurst. Bishop James W. Henley of the Florida Conference dedicated this on May 25, 1969. The adjoining Sunday School rooms, the present history room and the office space were dedicated at the same ceremony.

The spacious new Friendship Hall is a perfect place for meetings, entertaining, banquets, etc. Elliot Whitehurst spent much time seeing that it was properly constructed.

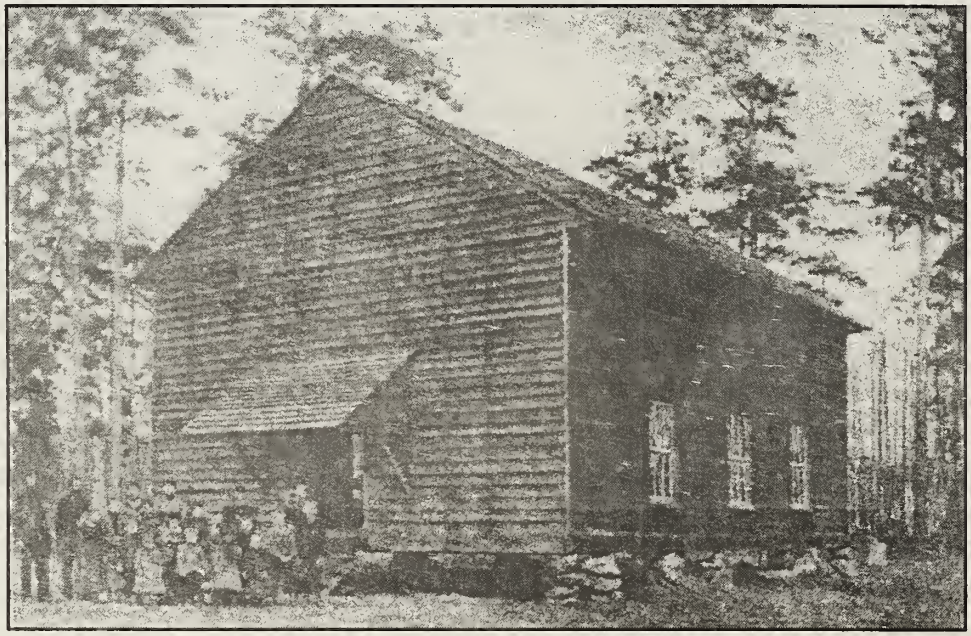
Many thanks to Joy Smith and her trustees for the excellent job of repairing our sanctuary and completing other jobs which required the patience of Job to succeed. You were an excellent chairperson!

Our Music Department has added so much to our overall church program. We owe a great deal to our choir director, our choirs (all levels), our pianists, our organist, and our minister for

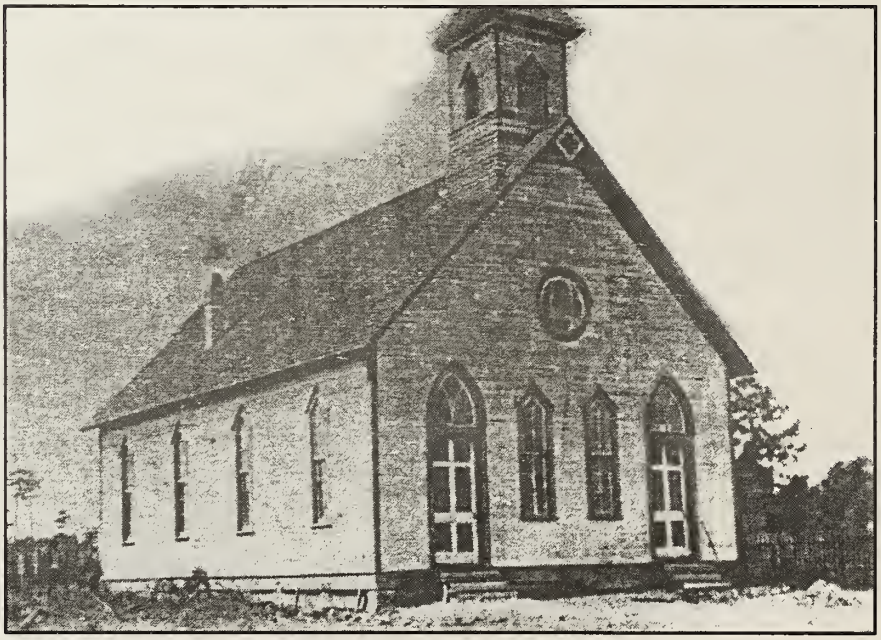
the wonderful work that is going on.

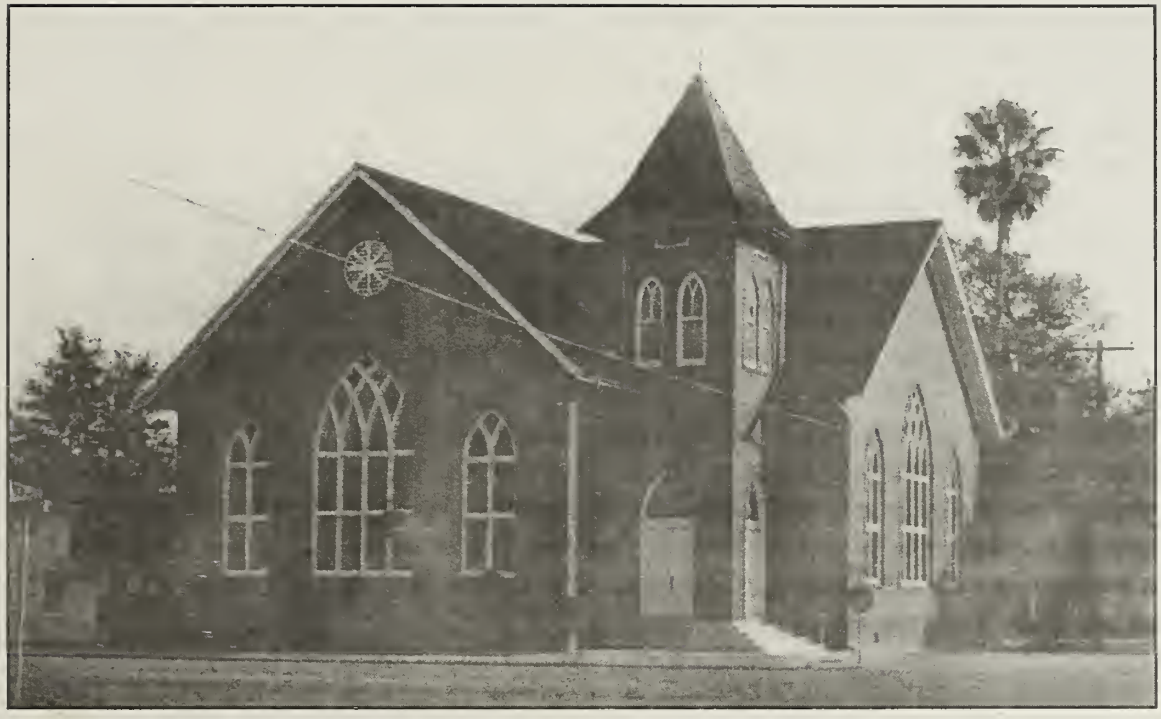
Over the years, many have contributed time, effort, and materials to provide training for our children and youth. This is one of the most important services that our church can offer. We have an outstanding group of children and young people who are learning to be responsible Christian citizens. Many of our young people have served as officers at the sub-district level of MYF and many have been winners in various speaking contests related to church activities. We are proud of you, young people. May we all learn something from you.

The Methodist Men's organization and the UMW have been instrumental in providing leadership and in making it possible to make improvements in church property. Both groups have worked hard to help finance needed projects.



M. E. Church Orange Hill 1885





# A SHORT HISTORY OF HARDEETOWN BAPTIST CHURCH

The First (Missionary) Baptist Church of Hardee was organized on April 18, 1920, at 4:00 p.m. The church has been known for a good many years as Hardeetown Baptist Church. The organizational meeting was held in the Methodist Church in Hardee.

The temporary moderrator was Rev. John F. Gable, a member of the State Mission Board. The clerk "protem" was Mrs. H.W. Arrington. "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord" was the first hymn to be sung.

The church covenant and the articles of faith by J. Newton Brown, D.D., editor of Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge and the Rules of Order included in the Convention Church Record published by the Sunday School Board, were all adopted by the congregation.

Before the meeting was adjourned, the doors of the church were opened for the reception of new members in "any customary" manner. Mrs. W.L. Tillis came forward making the first profession of faith in the new church. Mrs. Tillis was baptized in Manatee Springs on Monday, April 19, 1920.

A preaching service was held at 8:00 p.m. on the day of the organization, and Rev. Gable preached the first sermon to the new congregation on "The Good Samaritan."

The church existed from its organization until December 26, 1920, without a pastor. Other officers were elected the day following the organization of the church. These officers of the church were: Senior Deacon John F. Digman, Deacon Henry Lewis, Deacon B.B. Harrison, Sunday School Superintendent John F. Digman, Church Clerk B.B. Harrison and Church Treasurer A.E. Etheridge.

The Missionary Society had already been in existence for a year with Mrs. J.S. Fagan as president.

First (Missionary) Baptist Church of Hardee called a capable man as first pastor. On December 26, 1920, Rev. J.H. (Ham) Martin was called as pastor. The calling was somewhat unique, for it was not done in a business meeting. According to church minutes dated December 26, 1920, concerning the call of Rev. Martin, "This was done out of conference by Bro. J.F. Digman with a book and pencil by going to each member to get his or her vote." The call was for one year. The church did not set Rev. Martin's salary until the next March. His salary was set at not less than $200.00 per year.

This group may not have had much money, but they did have a will to work and they did want a church building. They got all the money they could together then they worked and raised even more to get the building built. With the hard work and sacrificial giving of the people and some friends, especially Correne and A.O. Hardee who gave the land upon which the church stands, and a cash gift of $750.00 from the State Mission Board, the first church building was built. The young church was also aided greatly by the W.F. Dukes Lumber Company.

The first church building exists now just as it did when it was built. There were shingles on the roof and kerosene lamps with reflectors for lighting. The church did buy a carbide light plant in 1926. Financially, the church reported at the end of its first full year of operation a total of $181.28 toward the operating expense of the church had been given.

The date of the resignation of Rev. Martin is not certain. It is recorded in the minutes of August 10, 1924, that "Rev. J.H. Martin's resignation was unanimously voted down and that pastor's salary was raised from $200.00 to $500.00 or more per year." How much longer Rev. Martin stayed is not clear.

The pastor who followed Rev. Martin was a man named Thompson. There are no records

available of church activities during his pastorate. Rev. R. R. Burke was called November 7, 1926. During the tenure of Rev. Burke as pastor, the carbide light and church bell were obtained.

Rev. Chapin was called to "serve the church" temporarily for two Sunday afternoons a month. Rev. Chapin was called to be the regular pastor October 28, 1928. The records for 1926-1944 are almost non-existent; therefore, this section of the history will be sketchy. Rev. R.M. Stanley served as pastor, as did Rev. Horace McLeroy, during those years. Rev. McLeroy served from the fall of 1933 until the fall of 1934.

Rev. J.C. Knight followed Rev. McLeroy and is reported as pastor of Hardeetown in the minutes of Harmony Baptist Association in 1936, 1937, 1938 and 1939. Rev. Knight also served three other churches in the association at the same time. They were all quarter-time.

Rev. U.W. Rollins is listed as pastor of Hardeetown in the association minutes of 1940, 1941, and 1942. Rev. Rollins was ordained at Hardeetown Baptist Church on July 9, 1940. As far as can be determined, Rev. Rollins is the only pastor ordained at Hardeetown. The church went half-time during Rev. Rollins' ministry

The Association minutes of 1943 list as pastor of the chruch Rev. T.J. Ellis. During the pastorate of Rev. Ellis, two men were ordained as deacons. They were Bro. Tyson and Bro. Charlie McElroy. The Annual Meeting of Harmony Baptist Association was at Hardeetown Baptist Church on October 22, 1941.

R.R. Sledge was called to pastor the church on December 5, 1944, and served until August 9, 1945. E.C. Lerch is listed as pastor in the Associational Minutes in 1946. Rev. Caines was called as pastor on November 1, 1946, and remained less than a year until October 5, 1947. The church reported its first Bible School in the 1947 Minutes of Harmony Baptist Association. The church remained without a pastor until March 28, 1948, when H.H. Long was called as pastor. He stayed a little more than a year, resigning on July 3, 1949.

In Septermber of 1949, the church called Rev. Bob Barwich, a Stetson student, as pastor. Under the leadership of Pastor Barwick, the church began to reclaim some of its vigor of pre-war days. The church voted to go full-time in October of 1951.

On January 4, 1953, Albert Goss, L.H. Arrington and B.T. Etheredge were elected as deacons. As the church began to grow, the people began to talk about a church pastorium. The property on which the pastorium stands was given to the church by Mr. Hogue. The men set their sails and went to work. By the winter of 1953, the pastorium was completed. Pastor Barwick resigned in the spring of 1954 and Rev. W.K Brown was called March 27, 1954.

Under the leadership of Rev. Brown and some of the laymen, there was an attempt to revive the Training Union which had not existed since B.Y.P.U. in the early history of the church. The Church was not ready to take the necessary action and this was not accomplished until later. In September of 1954, the six-point record system was adopted for the Sunday School. Rev. Brown resigned on March 6, 1955.

The next man called to pastor the church was destined to remain longer than any other pastor had. Rev. O. B. Hayman came to be pastor May 8, 1955. The Church voted to organize the Training Union on October 1, 1955. B.T. Etheredge was elected the director.

The Church moved into the first new unit of Sunday School rooms on October 1, 1956. By May of 1957, the church had voted to borrow money to complete the second unit. The third unit was not completed until late 1958 or early 1959.

The growth of all organizations of the church is clearly evident in the associational minutes. Beginning October 1, 1959, the church started Sunday School at 9:55 a.m.

K.A. Graham was ordained a deacon at Homecoming October 20, 1957.

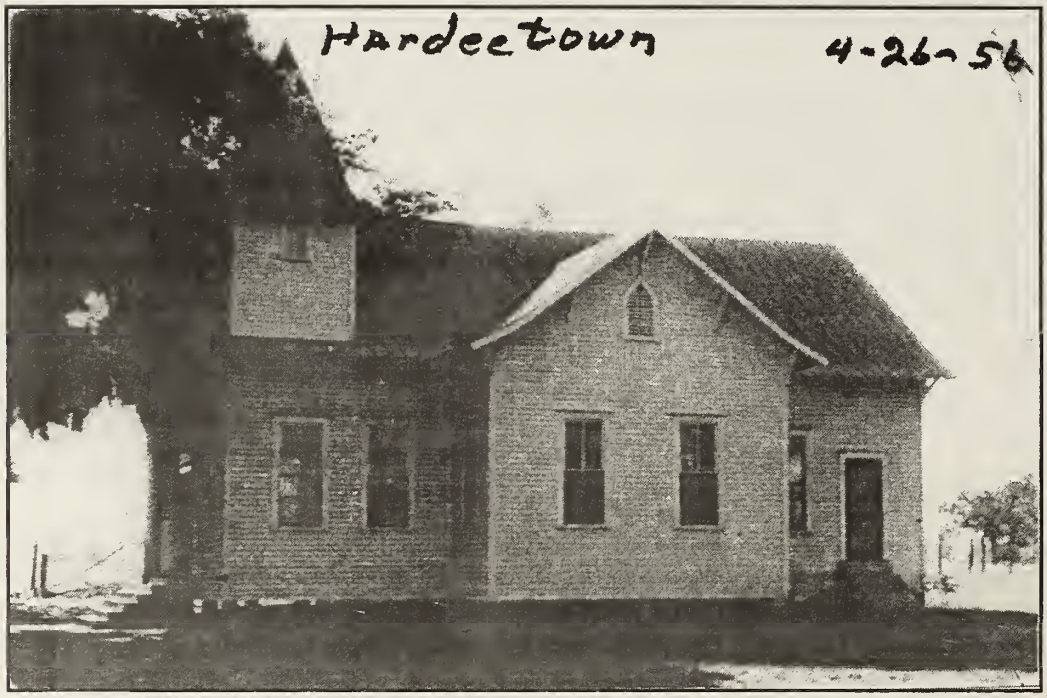
The Annual Meeting of Harmony Baptist Association was held at Hardeetown Baptist

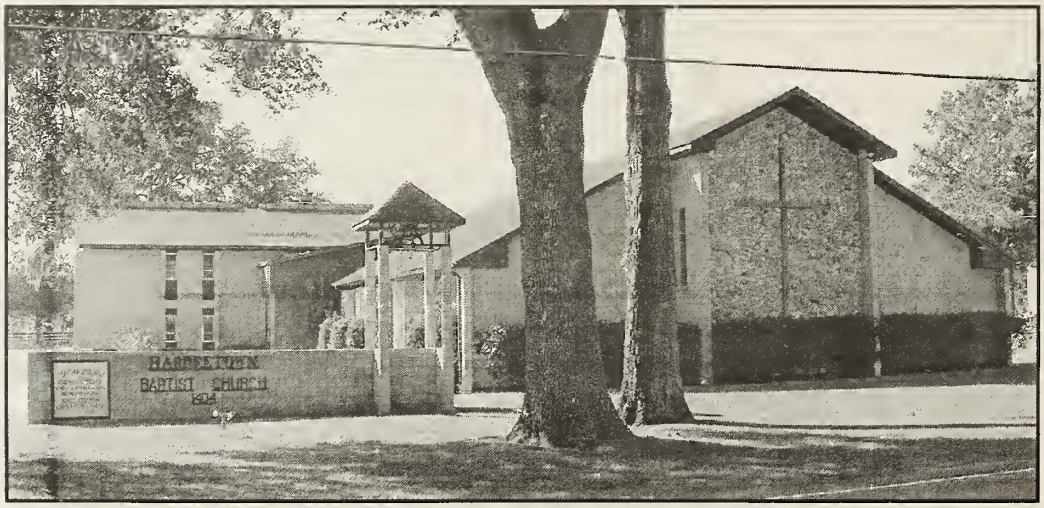
Church October 21, 1960.

Beginning early in 1960, the people began talking of remodeling the church. The matter was brought before the church on Sunday, July 17, 1960. Once again the people set to work and work was done. Rev. Hayman resigned March 19, 1961.

Rev. Ewell Johnson served the church as interim pastor during which time the church purchased a new piano, which is now in the worship sanctuary.

Rev. Robert Boyd was called as pastor on July 25, 1961, and came the first Sunday in September. On January 14, 1962, the church purchased the four lots from the estate of Mrs. Lillie Thomas, joining the church property and on the corner of Lucille Avenue and Second Street. Hardeetown Baptist Church is presently engaged in an attempt to promote a vigorous program. Work is being pushed ahead in the Sunday School, Training Union, Missionary and Music Organizations of the church.



# CHIEFLAND METHODIST
# CHURCH HISTORY

The Chiefland Methodist Church was organized in the home of I.P. Hardee with five or six members. This home, at the time, was known as Pine Hill and is situated two miles west of the present church location.

The circuit riders came to this area at that time by boat on the Suwannee River from Cedar Key or Branford, Florida; often walking the eight miles from the river to Pine Hill, where they were entertained several days or weeks at one time. Services were held in the home and in the slave quarters.

It was under the influence of these circuit riders that I.P. Hardee was converted and the church organized about 1861. History gives the population at that time at two to six people per square mile.

The meeting place was soon moved to the little log Schoolhouse about one-half mile west of the town of Chiefland. The log Schoolhouse served at the church for several years and was known as the Antioch Church, but later was found in church records as the Hardee Schoolhouse. This church was placed on the Levyville circuit which included Levyville, Rocky Hammock, Oak Grove, Weekiva, Otter Creek and Ft. Fannin. Bronson was added to the circuit about the year 1867.

In the year 1871 while J.P. Depass was presiding elder and T.R. Barnett preacher in charge, the first board of trustees from the now Bronson cirucit were chosen. They were: J. H. Hawkins and J.I. Epperson of Stafford's Pond; James H. Jackson, W.R. Coulter and W.A. Shands of Bronson; I.P. Hardee of Antioch; S.H. Worthington of Rocky Hammock; James Overstreet of Oak Grove.

The church was served in those early days and years by such faithful and courageous men as Rev. T.R. Barnett, R.M. Ellzey, S.E. Phillips, T.J. Nixon, H.E. Partridge and F.R. Bridges. In 1890 William E.J. Hardee was licensed to preach from this church. Since few records were kept, the actual dates and places of many events cannot be ascertained. About the year 1885 a church building, was constructed of wide rough boards and box style, and was built about a mile north east of the old log Schoolhouse. The lot was promised to the church but was never deeded. Services were held here until 1911.

During the years between 1885 and 1911 the church was often charged from one circuit to another, including the Bronson cirucit, Cedar Key, Old Town and later placed on the Trenton-Newberry circuit.

The conference often left the church to be supplied. The Rev. E.W. Rush and Rev. Granville Worthington were used several times as supply pastors, but more often Rev. R.M. Ellzey, a retired minister living at Ellzey, was used. Rev. Ellzey frequently walked from Ellzey to fill his appointment. As late as 1908 Rev. J.E. Sheppard, then a young man of 19 years, served the church, walking from Old Town to fill his appointment. Although the church was several times without a pastor there was always the faithful few who kept the Sunday School going and a spark of spirituality burning. In 1910 while the Rev. L.W. Moore was presiding elder and Rev. R. N. Saunders was pastor; J.S. Hardee, Sr., S. L. Hardee and O.D. Hardee were trustees of the church, it was decided to secure a lot and erect a new church building. In 1911 A.P. Hardee of Bronson gave them a deed to a lot in Hardeetown as a donation. A small but neat frame building was built. This was the first property owned by the church. In this new location the church was known as the Hardeetown Methodist Church.

During these years the town of Chiefland was growing and many Methodist members were coming and placing their letters in the Hardeetown church. Because of the missionary outlook

of the church, some members saw the need of a Sunday School in Chiefland; this was held in Woodmen Lodge Hall on the second floor of J.R. Hudson's dry-goods store at the present location of Levy County State Bank. It was then decided to build a larger church on the northeast side of Chiefland.

On October 20, 1928, H.A. Brown, J.S. Fisher, Sr. and C.B. McCall, who at that time were trustees of the church, purchased the present property from the Chiefland Development Company. In 1929 T.P. Rodgers, V.B. Hardee and John S. Fisher, Sr., trustees, held a joint meeting with the stewards, E.T. Usher, Geo. A. Williams and C.B. McCall, to make plans for building the church. During this year while Rev. R.A. Guy was presiding elder and Rev. H.G. Guy was pastor, a stucco building was begun and was finished in 1931. About this time, the Woman's Society of Christian Service was organized and was taking its place in the church. Mr. T.P. Rodgers, who worked so diligently for the new building, served as the first church school superintendent.

During the next several years the church had as its pastors Rev. Raymond Alley, Rev. Claire Hall, Rev. T. Jennings, Rev. John Gisler and Rev. Sparks.

In 1946, while Rev. C.C. Martin was pastor of the Cedar Key-Chiefland circuit, a parsonage was built at Chiefland and in 1947 while Rev. Martin was still pastor, Chiefland was made a full time charge. Rev. Martin's son, M.H. (Jiggs) Martin, was licensed in 1946 to preach. At the begining of Rev. Martin's ministry the church was at a low ebb with only 15 members being present at his first service.

In 1948 Rev. Roy Ben Ridley came as full-time pastor. During his first year the church had a successful Vacation Bible School for the first time in 10 years. Rev. Ridley accomplished much work with Alcoholics Anonymous. In February 1949, Julian P. Turner began his study to become a minister. The church building was condemned in 1949, having been destroyed by termites. Rev. Ridley, with the assistance of the local board, immediately began making plans for a new building.

To raise money to help finance the new church, pledges were made. Also to raise money a Hardee reunion was held May 22, 1949, at the old I.P. Hardee home where the church was first organized. At this reunion all descendants and friends registered and made a contribution to the building fund as they entered the grounds. The homecoming sermon was preached in the morning at the church by Rev. A.G. Hardee, great-grandson of I.P. Hardee. In the afternoon, services were conducted from the porch of the old home. Dr. Peele, District Superintendent, and several others gave short talks with Bishop Roy Short being the main message. Following these service descendants of the Hardee slaves entertained the crowd by singing spirituals at the cemetery where a plaque was dedicated in memory of the slaves who are buried in the family cemetery.

Rev. Monroe C. Hatch was pastor from 1949 to 1951. He, and the official board completed the plans for a new church building. The building was to be of concrete and block. During the building of the structure all services were held in the high school auditorium.

The first service was held in the new building on Easter Sunday, 1950.

Rev. Grady E. Moates succeeded Rev. Hatch as pastor of the church. Rev. Moates resigned in November, 1951, and Rev. L.E. Watkins was sent to finish the conference year. It was during this year that plans were made to combine, for permanent record, all the available history of the church, continuing to add each year that which is worthwhile, and the progress made in the church through the years. During this year a social and fellowship hour known as, "Family Night," was started. This was held on the first Monday night of each month, but was later changed to every quarter so as to correspond with the annual "Hog-killing" dinner, which is a

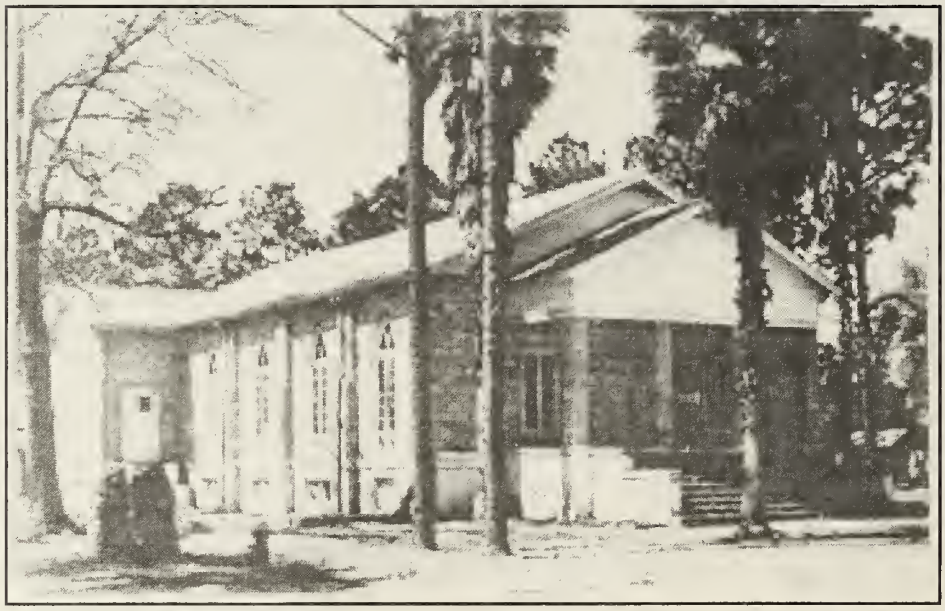
Woman's Society of Christian Service project. The "Hog-killing" was established in the year 1948 and is a social combined with an excellent plan to secure funds for the church. Church attendance was down some, compared to former years. Still, there was always the same faithfuls to keep things going and we lost several member who moved.

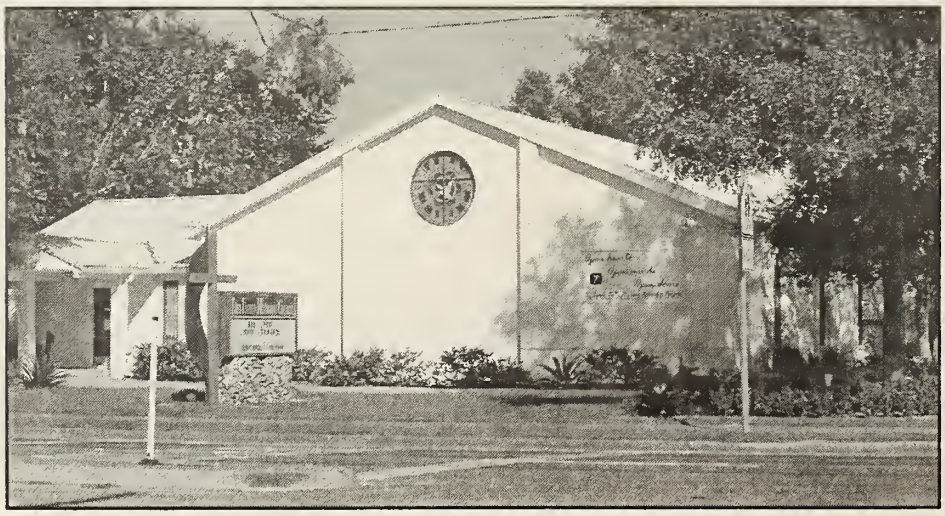
Rev. Gene Zimmerman succeeded Rev. Eggleston in June, 1954. It was during his ministry that a Cuban pre-seminary student in Cuba was supported for two years by several member of the church.

Rev. Don Padgett served from 1956-1960. The Men's Club was re-organized and received their charter. Rev. Padgett conducted services at the State Prison Camp. He was active in P.T.A., Lions Club, and all community work, including leading the Boy Scouts. It was during his pastorate that a new six-room education building was built and dedicated. Funds for the building were secured by pledges and donations. The church Sunday School and worship services continued to grow through his ministry. The pastor, seeing the need of a recreation center, a shuffle board court, ping pong and table tennis games were put in the basement for the benefit of anyone who wished to play. About once each quarter Friendship Night was held in the basement.

At the beginning of the Conference year, June, 1960, Rev. Duane Meier succeeded Rev. Padgett. He was very effective in organizing the various committees as outlined by the Discipline. Also, the Methodist Youth Fellowship grew in numbers and became very active, receiving the Sub-District attendance plaque four months of the year and could have had it six months, except that the rule of the Sub-District is that a local church can only have the plaque two months at a time. Mrs. Joseph Lloyd was the counselor. In 1961 the Sub-District elected two officers from our church, Mary Ellen Meier and Kirk shiver. Mrs. John Swilley is the counselor.

| District Superintendents 1861-1961 | J.W. Bigham |
|---|---|
| H.E. Partridge | A.E. Householder |
| S.E. Phillips | G.S. Roberts |
| W.F. Norton | C.H. Summers |
| J.C. Sale, Sr. | R.A. Guy |
| C.A. Sanders | L.M. Broyles |
| I.S. Patterson | W.A. Myers |
| W.A. Cole | H.C. Hardin |
| J.H. Hilburn | Shular Peele |
| F.R. Bridges | R.E. Rutland |
| T.J. Nixon | J.E. McKinley |





# OTTER CREEK MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

Our History

The year was 1902. Theodore Roosevelt presided over a young nation composed of 45 states. Alaska, Arizona, Hawaii, New Mexico and Oklahoma had not yet joined the Union. Putting in 59 hours of work, the average American made $12.98 a week, and could expect to live about 47 years. With only ten miles of paved roads in the United States, the 8,000 or so cars couldn't go too far from home.

It was against this backdrop that the Otter Creek Missionary Baptist Church had its beginning in Otter Creek, Florida. Since no records survive from that time period, an exact date for the organization of the church cannot be determined. However, oral tradition, as well as a 1936 Harmony Baptist Association Annual Report and a document written in 1957 by William Samuel Yearty (1877-1971), establishes the year as 1902.

The church was organized by a group of fifteen people with J. W. Quincey as pastor. Four of those first fifteen members are known to be William Elihu Yearty (1845-1936), his wife, Felicia (1853-1904), and his two sons, William Samuel (1877-1971) and Eugene H. (1833-1936). The present Yearty family has in their possession the original documents of the transfer of membership of this family from the Sumner Missionary Baptist Church (Sumner, Levy County, Florida) on May 4, 1901 to another "church of the same faith and order."

Records from the Levy County Courthouse reveal that for the sum of $40.00 Mrs. Sarah Ellen (Oglesby) Daniels sold the Otter Creek Missionary Baptist Church the property where the first (and present) church stands. The date of the sale was October 14, 1904. According to a history of the church written in 1957, the church was built two years after it was organized. Where and how often the group met during the first two years is not known. Following is a summary of the expansion of facilities and property acquisition:

- In 1924 more lots were purchased and a remodeling project on the church was undertaken.
- The pastorium was constructed in 1947 on land donated by the Nick and Burt West family.
- A new porch was constructed in 1952, replacing the wooden porch with concrete.
- In the 50s during the pastorate of Gene Keith two bathrooms were added to the church.
- Property was acquired in 1979 from Mrs. Missouri Cobb to build a fellowship hall and classrooms.
- Fellowship hall and classrooms were completed in 1982.
- In 1984, under the pastorate of Don Burgess, plans were made to begin construction for a new sanctuary (our present building), with construction beginning in 1986.
- The dedication of the new sanctuary was in 1990.
- In 1993 property west of the church was acquired from Willie Mae Schibley and Rubye Sher, daughters of Will and Lulu Yearty.
- In 1996 property east of the church was acquired from Lugene Overton, daughter of Will and Lulu Yearty.
- A new fellowship hall and classrooms were completed and dedicated in 1999.
- A temporary building was purchased for classroom space for the church and school in 2002.

Otter Creek
4-26-56

## FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Otter Creek, Florida

The First Baptist Church was organized in Otter Creek, Florida in the year 1902. The membership upon organization consisted of 15 people, all of whom came from other churches.

The first deacon to serve was Brother William Elihu Yearty who came from Shiloh Church, Sumner, Florida. Upon organization, the church called as its first pastor, Rev. J. W. Quincey, who lived in Levyville, Florida. Twice each month our pastor would arrive by horse and buggy to conduct services.

Rev. Quincey served as our pastor for about three years before accepting the call to another field of service.

In 1904, A. B. Jones and family moved to Otter Creek to open a general store. Mr. Jones was a Baptist and became disturbed over the condition of the church. Under his leadership the church began a campaign to raise money to build a meeting place for the church.

The people responded cheerfully and soon a lot was purchased and the building constructed. A pastor was soon called and the deeds to the church property were entrusted to the deacons and their successors.

From 1904 until 1906 the church met twice each month. But in 1906 Mr. Jones sold his business and moved away. For some time the church was without a pastor and services no longer were regular. Often we met together when a visiting preacher was passing through and although we usually had Baptist services – the preachers were often Methodist.

In 1912, Rev. Elias Turner and his son, Dr. J. W. Turner, moved to Otter Creek and through their combined efforts the church was strengthened and revived.

The church met together and rededicated itself and began to have regular services again.

We don't have a complete list of all of our former pastors, but we would like to mention a few:

| | |
|---|---|
| J. W. Quincey | Rev. Norris |
| Ed Boyer | Rev. Carr |
| J. W. Hilton | Rev. Berry |
| Doc F. Berry | Rev. Allen |
| C. D. Parkerson | Rev. Chapin |
| Peter Lancaster | Rev. Lerch |
| J. R. Douglas | Rev. Kilpatrick |
| S. S. Proctor | Rev. Evans |
| C. J. Bruner | Rev. Van Allen |
| J. E. Hodge | Rev. G. W. Dunn |
| Elias Turner | Rev. V. Clyatt |
| Phate Johnson | Rev. Gene Keith |

In 1947 the church agreed to build a pastorium. The property was donated by the West brothers and the building was constructed by the Brice Brothers Construction Company of Archer, Florida. Rev. Evans and family were the first to live in the house owned by Otter Creek Baptist Church.

The last part-time pastor to serve us was Bro. George Dunn. During his ministry, the foundation was laid for very effective work in the years to follow. New Sunday School rooms were added and Buford Holmes and A. G. Roach were set aside for deaconship.

During the time both Otter Creek and Bronson were part-time churches and Rev. Dunn was pastor of both. There was at the same time a wonderful spirit of cooperation between our

part-time church and the Methodist church in Ellzey. They would meet with us when we held services and we would meet with them when their pastor would conduct services.

There was some discussion about Bronson moving into a full-time program and our pastor stated that he would gladly accept the call to the first church that did go full-time. The Lord blessed and Bro. Dunn became the first full-time pastor of Bronson Baptist Church.

We were again without a pastor and still were only having services twice a month with Baptist Training Union meeting on Thursday night. The church elected a pulpit committee to find a pastor and we discussed the possibility of calling a pastor full-time. We decided that if we could find a preacher who could get along on $40.00 or $45.00 a week, we would call him full-time.

On the first Sunday in January 1954, Vernon Clyatt was accepted as our first full-time pastor and this was the beginning of a new work – "A full-time preaching and teaching ministry."

During the months that followed we made great strides. B. H. Holmes and A. G. Roach were ordained as deacons. Baptist Training Union began meeting on Sunday night; our Sunday School enrollment climbed to 112; B.T.U. was now 74; and for the year we baptized 17 converts and gave $292.53 through the Cooperative Program.

In 1955 Rev. Clyatt resigned to accept the call to Oklawaha Church, Oklawaha, Florida and in May 1955, we called as our pastor, Rev. Gene Keith from Tate Church, Orlando.

During the months that followed we were very fortunate to have as our Sunday School Superintendent Brother Jim Mallory, also of Orlando. We became concerned over our Sunday School work and made plans to enlarge our ministry. We stepped up from a class type Sunday School to the more effective Department Sunday School. We added another nursery and two new restrooms with a cash outlay of $967.64.

We now had almost doubled the number of teachers and officers and felt the need for a weekly meeting to study and plan our teaching methods and messages. We began meeting on Wednesday evening and it has been an unmeasured blessing to all.

We observed Promotion Day and for preparation we studied the book, "The Pull of the People." At the close of a wonderful week of study we made final plans to establish a mission Sunday School in Gulf Hammock, Florida, and this we did on November 1, 1956.

Soon after this the church came together for the purpose of selecting several men to serve as deacons. By unanimous vote the following men were ordained: Mr. Monroe Kilcrease; Mr. Jim Mallory; Mr. James Standridge; and Mr. Sam Standridge.

Last year we received recognition for being second in Harmony Association in percentage giving through the Baptist Cooperative Program. This year we gave over $400.00 and have increased our giving from 10 to 12 percent.

Our mission has been very successful and has a total enrollment of 47, and our total average Sunday School attendance has been as high as 103.

We now stand after 55 years of service in this community forgetting things past and with one spirit looking for those things which lie ahead. Praying and trusting that when our Lord and Savior appears the second time – He will find us faithful and ready in His service.

Respectfully Submitted (November. 1, 1957),
Rev. Gene Keith
Deacon Will S. Yearty
Mrs. Missouri Cobb
Mrs. Thelma Phelps, Clerk

## BRONSON CHURCH OF GOD BY FAITH

"History"

In the beginning the first Church of God by Faith in Bronson was located on Pine Street on the land behind the current Post Office. It was a small wood building with no electricity. It was lit by oil lamps and warmed by wood heaters. As far back as can be recalled, Elder Mose Mack was one of the first pastors of Bronson Church of God By Faith. Elder Mack, his wife Irene and his family moved from Hawthorne to Newberry, Florida in 1935. In 1938 they were assigned to pastor the church of Bronson. Some of the first saints were Deacon and Mother Mack Dixon. On cold mornings Deacon Dixon would arrive early and fire-up the wood heaters so the church would be warm by the 10:30 a.m. Sunday School Service. After Sunday School, there was Bible Study, Dinner, WWC, and then Night Service. The saints stayed around the church all day, worshipping God, fellowshipping with each other, laughing, talking and just enjoying each other's company. Other saints at that time were Sister Fannie Mae Brown, Sister Patterson and many others.

During the journey Elder Mack had to hire a driver to bring him, his wife, and their two daughters, Ola Pearl and Mozell to church on Sundays from Newberry. Mr. Richard Hughes was their main driver. He was also the father of Mother Guinna Wood, who is a member of Newberry Church of God by Faith. Mr. Hughes would sometimes stay in Bronson all day for all four services. When he could not stay, he would return to Bronson after night service to take the Mack's back to Newberry. One particular Sunday when Mr. Hughes could not drive for Elder Mack, the other expected driver did not show up. There were no phones at that time, so they had no way to contact the saints or anyone else. They waited all morning. But that didn't stop Elder Mack from going to church. He and his two daughters left the house at noon on their two feet. As Mother Mozell recalls (who was 13 years old at that time); "It was a l-o-n-g, hot and dusty walk! Bronson seemed to be nowhere in sight. Mom could not make the trip because she was taking care of our new baby brother, James." Finally, they arrived in Bronson, at 6:00 p.m., just in time for night service.

Over the past 60-plus years, many great leaders have served in Bronson. Renovations were made to the old wood church under many of the leaders including Elder E.T. Taylor. Deacon Frank Edmonson, Sr., and his wife Lillie, were members under Elder Taylor. During the Pastorship of Elder Joseph Camps the saints began raising money to build a new church. The very first pledge was $25, made by Mother Mozell. After Elder Camps was reassigned, the saints continued to work towards the new church under Elder Roosevelt Jones. The new church on 360 Glover Street was dedicated during the Pastorship of Elder Phillip Sams. In 1977 Elder Willie McKnight, Sr., was assigned to Pastor at Bronson. Elder McKnight, his wife Dora, and their family served in Bronson for 21 years. Under their leadership many souls were added to the church. In addition, a major renovation was made to the sanctuary. The annex included a dining room, church office/finance room, classroom and pastor's study. In 1999 Elder Jackie Reynalds, Sr., was assigned to Pastor at Bronson. God has given him a drive to beautify the grounds surrounding the church. We have been blessed to pave a portion of the parking area. Further landscaping of the grounds are planned in the not so distant future.

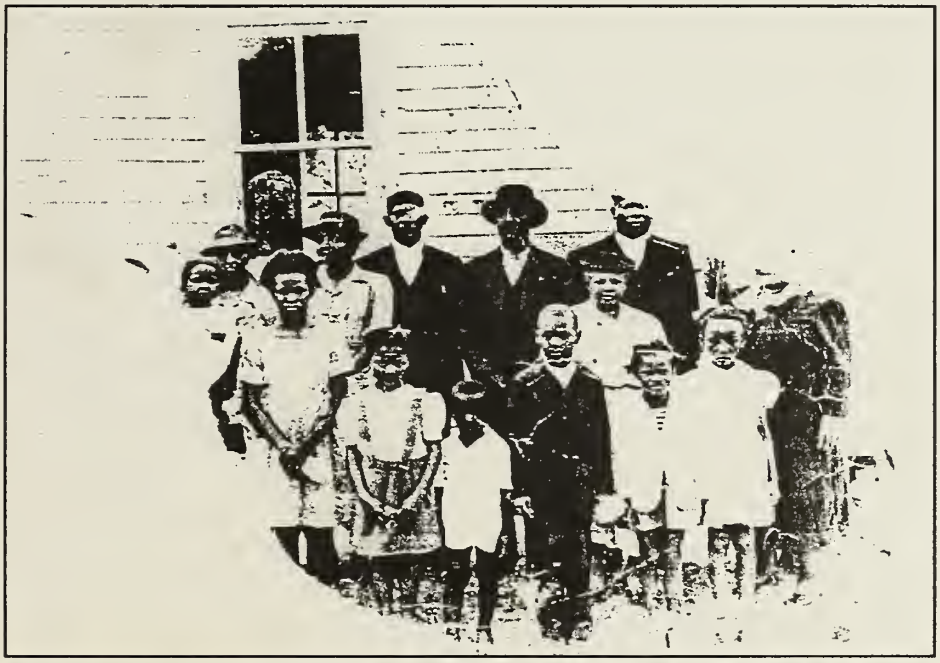
Former Shepherds

The following have served as Pastors of Bronson Church of God by Faith. Shepherds serving before 1938 are unknown at this time.

Elder Mose Mack and wife Irene, 1938, their favorite song was "I'm Gonna Be Like The Lord Someday."

Elder Eddie Clay and wife, their favorite song was "The Sun Will Never Go Down."

Elder ET Taylor and wife
Elder John Reid and wife, their favorite song was "One Day Jesus Saved Me."
Elder Mack Dixon and wife Janie, their favorite song was "Everything Going Down " and "There Is A Crown Of Life"
Elder Joseph Camps and wife, Sarah, their favorite song was "There Is A Fountain Filled With Blood"
Elder Roosevelt Jones and wife, their favorite song was "Standing In The Safety Zone"
Elder Phillip Sams and wife
Elder Earnest Williams and wife, their favorite song was "Hope It Won't Be Like This Always"
Elder Willie McKnight and wife, Dora, 1977-98, their favorite song was "Precious Memories"
Elder Jackie Reynolds, Sr., and wife, Carolyn, 1999-2003, their favorite song, "When I've Gone My Last Mile," and "Jesus I'll Never Forget What You've Done For Me"
Current Shepherd
Elder Carl Carnegie and wife, Janie, 2004 to date, their favorite song, "Heaven, Heaven"



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